



New Families Created at Annual Adoption Day Event

By Kathryn Alfisi and Thai Phi Le

On November 17 the atrium of the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse was filled with the sound of children whose adoptions were finalized during the 26th Annual Adoption Day in Court ceremony.

Thirty-four children were officially adopted during the event, a joint program of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

The ceremony featured guest speaker Reese Hoffa, a shot put bronze medalist at the 2012 London Olympics who was himself adopted at a young age. Hoffa expressed hope that the adoptive parents at the ceremony would give their children as good a life as his adoptive parents gave him.

The audience also heard remarks from D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield, CFSA director Brenda Donald, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray, and Judge Zoe Bush, presiding judge of the Family Court and an adoptive parent.

Barbara Harrison, NBC4 news anchor and host of the weekly segment "Wednesday's Child," emceed the event and introduced every child and adoptive parent as their adoption decrees were being signed.

During the past year, 197 children – excluding those whose adoptions were finalized during the program – were formally adopted through the Superior Court. However, 120 children were still seeking adoptive parents.

Helping with one of these adoptions was Roland C. Goss, a partner at Jorden Burt LLP. Goss took on the adoption case through his pro bono work with the Children's Law Center, where he has worked on adoptions and guardianship cases for approximately six years.

"My firm does pretty complex commercial litigation, regulation for large insurance companies, and to be able to take those skills and apply them in a context like this is just wonderful," he said.

His most recent case involved a three-year-old girl who was removed from her mother's care at two weeks old. Goss's client took the girl in about a year ago, at which time she was not talking or walking and had developmental and medical problems. With the help of comprehensive services, she is now jumping, running, and speaking in short sentences.

"It's just amazing what good, caring, stable parents can do for those kinds of kids," Goss said.

Similar events were held throughout the country to celebrate National Adoption Day and to bring awareness to the plight of children in foster care and awaiting adoption. – K.A.